

## Message Text

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ACTION AF-06

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FM AMEMBASSY TANANARIVE  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6812

C O N F I D E N T I A L TANANARIVE 0016

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: CASC, MA (REPPAS, GEORGE)

SUBJECT: FOLLOW-UP ON AMBASSADOR'S APPROACH TO HEAD OF GOVT  
ON REPPAS CASE

REF: TANANARIVE 1602

1. CHARGE CALLED ON DIPLOMATIC ADVISOR TO HEAD OF GOVT, HENRI RAZAFINDRATOVO, JAN 3 TO ASK IF RESPONSE TO SUBJECT APPROACH WOULD SOON BE FORTHCOMING. DIPADV REPLIED THAT HE WOULD RAISE WITH GENERAL RAMANANTSOA BUT THAT, SPEAKING PERSONALLY, HE EXPECTED NEGATIVE RESPONSE. BASIC PROBLEM WAS MAGNITUDE OF REPPAS SWINDLE AND LARGE LOSS TO GOMR, HE SAID. RAZAFINDRATOVO SAID HE FELT NEW PUBLICITY GENERATED BY AGM PLANE THEFT, BOGUS U.S. BANK NOTES, AND GENERAL INCREASE IN CRITICISM OF GOVT MADE RELEASE OF REPPAS IN NEAR FUTURE ESPECIALLY DIFFICULT POLITICALLY. WHEN CHARGE NOTED THAT NEITHER USG NOR REPPAS INVOLVED IN THESE RECENT EVENTS, HE AGREED BUT SAID THAT THEY SERVED TO CREATE UNFAVORABLE ATMOSPHERE.

2. DIPADV ALSO REFERRED TO REPPAS IDENTIFICATION WITH PREVIOUS GOVERNMENT, ESPECIALLY RESAMPA, WHICH HE SAID MADE CASE MORE COMPLEX. HE NOTED THAT PREVIOUS GOVT DID NOT EVEN CONDUCT FEASIBILITY STUDY BEFORE STARTING ABATTOIR.

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3. WHEN CHARGE RAISED HUMANITARIAN ASPECTS OF CASE, RAZAFINDRATOVO RESPONDED THAT THOSE ARGUMENTS IN HIS VIEW WOULD BE UNPERSUASIVE FOR MALAGASY PUBLIC. HE VOLUNTEERED THAT HE HOPED REPPAS SENTENCE COULD BE SHORTENED TO SOMETHING LESS THAN FIVE YEARS, ADDING THAT REPPAS WAS PROBLEM FOR GOMR WHICH THEY WOULD LIKE TO SETTLE BY GETTING HIM OUT OF COUNTRY. RAZAFINDRATOVO, WHO WAS PLEASANT AND APPARENTLY SINCERE THROUGHOUT DISCUSSION, CONCLUDED BY SAYING HE HOPED REPPAS CASE WOULD NOT AFFECT GOOD US-GOMR RELATIONS. CHARGE RESPONDED THAT HE SHARED THAT HOPE BUT NOTED USG UNDER PRESSURE TO FIND SOLUTION. DIPADV SAID HE UNDERSTOOD THIS.

4. EMBASSY COMMENT: DIPADV'S FRANK COMMENTS ON POLITICAL ASPECTS OF REPPAS CASE WERE IN CONTEXT OF DIFFICULTIES POSED GOMR IN EARLY RELEASE OF REPPAS. HE DID NOT SUGGEST POLITICAL FACTORS WERE PRESENT IN REPPAS' CONVICTION AND SENTENCE. EMBASSY TIMING OF THIS FOLLOW-UP WAS BASED ON DESIRE TO LET DUST SETTLE ONVNWNPANE AFFAIR AGAINST NEED TO RAISE BEFORE SUPREME COURT APPEAL STARTED. FINAL DECISION UP TO GENERAL RAMANANTSOA, OF COURSE, BUT EMBASSY BELIEVES RAZAFINDRATOVO'S INSTINCTS ARE SOUND.  
ELFERS

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